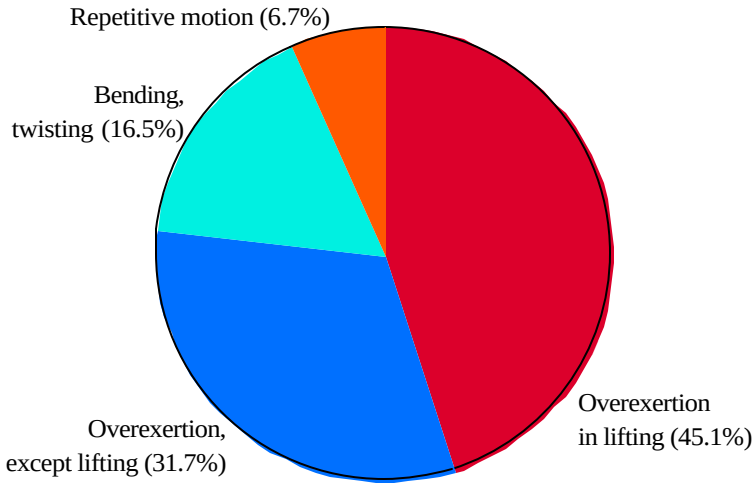
Musculoskeletal Disorders in Construction and Other Industries

Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMDs) made up 52,303 (27%) of the 193,765 nonfatal injuries and illnesses in construction in 1999. Overexertion in lifting caused 45% of the musculoskeletal disorders in construction and other overexertion, such as pushing, pulling, and carrying, caused 32% (chart 42a).[1]

The rate of overexertion injuries in construction is exceeded only by the rate in the transportation industry (chart 42b). For overexertion injuries related to lifting, the rate for construction is 1.4 times the rate for all industries. Repetitive motion injuries, which include carpal tunnel syndrome, are less of a problem in construction than in some other industries.

Within construction, roofing, siding and sheet metal, masonry, and carpentry have the highest rates of injuries tied to overexertion in lifting (chart 42c). For other overexertion injuries, roofing, siding, and sheetmetal had the highest rates.

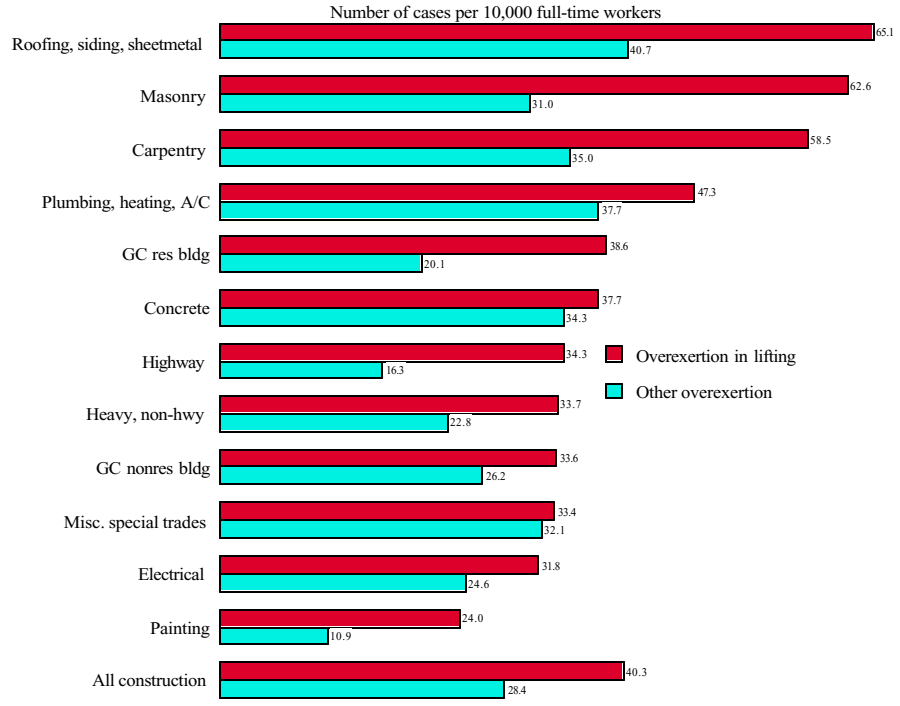
42a. Distribution of risk factors for musculoskeletal disorders with days away from work in construction, 1999



1.Strains and sprains are commonly used as a stand-in for work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMDs). An analysis of BLS data for 1999, however, shows that only 61% of strains and sprains are actually WMDs, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics definition. According to BLS, work-related musculoskeletal disorders include cases where the nature of injury or illness is sprains, strains, tears; back pain, hurt back; soreness, pain, hurt, except the back; carpal tunnel syndrome; hernia; or musculoskeletal system symptom and connective tissue diseases and disorders and when the event or exposure leading to the injury or illness is bodily reaction/bending climbing, crawling, reaching, twisting; overexertion; or repetition (*Lost-worktime Injuries and Illnesses: Characteristics and Resulting Time Away From Work*, 1999, News Release, March 28, 2001. *See* BLS web site **www.bls.gov/news.release/osh2.nr0.htm**)

42b. Rate of overexertion injuries resulting in days away from work, by industry, 1999

42c. Rate of overexertion injuries resulting in days away from work, by construction industry, 1999



Note: All charts - Data cover private sector only and exclude self-employed.

Charts 42a, 42b, and 42c - BLS provides the data for injuries and illnesses combined, but illnesses make up less than 2% of the total in construction. Because many construction workers work part time at construction, safety and health statistics are defined in terms of full-time equivalents to allow comparisons with other industries. Full-time work is defined as 2,000 hours worked per year.

Chart 42a - Total of 52,303 injuries.

Chart 42c - Total numbers for lifting overexertion is 23,578 and for other overexertion is 16,603; all categories > 1,000 on lifting, except highway and street (901), and painting (442); in other overexertion, all categories > 1,000, except carpentry (945), roofing, siding, and sheetmetal (875), highway and street (430), and painting (201).

Source: Chart 42a - Bureau of Labor Statistics web site, **www.bls.gov/iif/oshcdnew.htm**, table R64, 1999.

Charts 42band 42c - Bureau of Labor Statistics web site **www.bls.gov/iif/oshcdnew.htm**, table R8, 1999.